

ARTICLE 303
COMMERCIAL SYSTEM

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STATUS

The commercial land use portion of the Master Plan was originally developed as an integral part of the Proposed Generalized Land Use Plan. It was adopted in this form as part of the Master Plan by the Common Council in March 1948 (J.C.C., p. 499). Revisions to the classification of commercial uses and shopping centers were adopted by Common Council on April 30, 1957 (J.C.C., p. 859) and March 30, 1965 (J.C.C., p. 667).

More recent amendments, adopted on April 28, 1970 (J.C.C., p. 1011) added objectives and location criteria for general commercial and neighborhood shopping areas. Objectives and location criteria for major commercial areas, special-commercial residential areas, and local commercial uses were adopted on March 7, 1972 (J.C.C., pp. 494-502) and March 14, 1972 (J.C.C., pp. 559-564), in connection with the planning for the Model Neighborhood and New Center areas. The most recent amendment adopted on Feb. 27, 1973 (J.C.C., pp. 502-506) as part of the planning for the Jefferson-Chalmers area proposes multiple residential development in general commercial areas.

303.0100 COMMERCIAL LAND USE

303.0101 Objectives

Striking changes in recent years in the size and distribution of retail stores raised several problems for urban areas which have been platted and partially developed according to an older pattern.

By providing off-street parking, food and department stores have been able to increase the size and trading area of local shopping centers. In the emerging pattern there are developing fairly large shopping centers with a tributary area ranging from two neighborhoods to a whole community, i.e., 20,000 persons to 150,000 persons.

These shopping centers are composed of department stores,

apparel shops, specialty goods stores, food stores, banks, utility offices, and frequently a movie house and other entertainment places. While the buildings in typical centers occupy from two to ten acres of land, experience with parking in some centers indicates that at least three times the ground area of the building is needed to meet the need for parking. Consequently, some means of deepening the frontage of present platting to get suitable space for parking must be discovered. In newly developing centers this space can frequently be found. In older centers, clearance of nearby houses may be necessary. Similarly, in the case of commercial development located in the frontage along Detroit's major thoroughfares, additional parking is often needed; this can be obtained either by deepening the frontage or by the removal of obsolete structures in the frontage. New uses attracted to this frontage should relate to the traffic function of the thoroughfare. Those uses which serve a large area should generally be located along the radial thoroughfares, while uses that serve a smaller area could locate either along these radials, or along other less important thoroughfares.

The pattern of retail trading is still in transition, but it is not anticipated that all types of commercial activity will gravitate to shopping centers. The exceptions can be grouped roughly into two types:

1. Neighborhood stores within one-half mile of homes which they serve. These neighborhood stores may themselves be grouped in small centers or remain as isolated stores in commercial frontage.
2. Automobile sales rooms, undertaking establishments, repair shops, printing shops, wholesale distributors, very light industry, and similar general commercial activities which ordinarily locate on major thoroughfares but not in high rental centers.

To meet the new needs of commerce, and to provide adequately for the city's necessary jobs, income, tax base, services and products, the commercial land use portion of the Master Plan has the following objectives:

1. Encourage grouping of stores in centers where off-street parking can be provided.
2. Encourage an economically sound distribution pattern for shopping centers by showing locations of present and potential centers which together offer a good distribution pattern.

3. Prevent unnecessary scattering of commercial activities by limiting commercial frontage in sound relationship to the anticipated requirements.
4. Provide sufficient flexibility to accommodate new commercial functions and new techniques for handling existing commercial functions.
5. Minimize the conflicts of commercial development with other land uses requiring protection, with buffering, or other means.
6. Encourage the re-use of obsolete commercial land and facilities through both private and public action.

303.0102 Criteria for Commercial Areas

The Future General Land Use map shows five categories of commercial use:

1. Major commercial areas consist of a high concentration of office activity and related supporting services; retail trade at the comparison shopping level (includes neighborhood shopping and local commercial as well); specialized shops, stores and services which require a large population to support them; and high-rise and medium-rise apartments and hotels. The level of activity is generally region-wide in service area with offices and headquarters relating to state, national and international operations. The primary focus should be an office employment center.

Major commercial areas should be located so as to be highly accessible from the city and the region, by freeways, major thoroughfares, and mass transit.

Major commercial areas should be developed at a high intensity, in order that a large number of activities can take advantage of the location, and linkages between activities can be strengthened. Multi-use structures combining office, retail and residential activities are appropriate. Parking structures and mass transit service should be used as a means of achieving compact, intense development. Ground level activity should be pedestrian, shopping, and entertainment oriented so as to achieve maximum utilization of the concentration of public and private development.

Detroit has two major commercial areas: Downtown Detroit (CBD), and the New Center.

2. Special commercial-residential areas (predominantly commercial) consist of either a major office headquarters complex, an international gateway, or a major spectator sport or convention facility of regional significance, with supporting office and service activities, apartments, and their necessary service facilities. Special commercial-residential areas should possess excellent accessibility by freeways, major thoroughfares, and rapid transit.

Special commercial-residential areas should be developed with a compatible mixture of uses that require excellent accessibility, exposure to large volumes of traffic, and/or the proximity to special features described above. Typical special commercial-residential uses, in addition to the major facility, are medium-rise offices, motels, restaurants, major institutions, and medium and high-rise apartments. The mixture of uses to be encouraged in special commercial-residential areas may vary in relation to the particular location and major activity, but the area should retain a commercial (work place) predominance and focus. It is desirable to have at least 20% of the floor area in a special commercial-residential area devoted to medium and high-rise apartments, developed compatibly above or alongside commercial uses so as to obtain maximum access and exposure to the major commercial or institutional development. Wherever feasible, existing viable residential development should be retained and reinforced.

3. General commercial areas consist of low-intensity retail and wholesale uses along major thoroughfares which are suitable for business, warehouse, and some light industrial activities. Typical general commercial uses are automobile and furniture sales rooms and repair shops, business services, building and contractor offices, and wholesale distributors. Some local commercial and multiple residential uses may also locate with advantage in these areas. General commercial uses that have no marked adverse affect on residential areas can locate in areas which adjoin residential and in special residential-commercial areas. General commercial uses that, because of the nature of their business and/or operational characteristics, have a marked adverse affect on residential areas, should locate in those areas that are separated from residential development by freeways and major thoroughfares.
4. Comparison shopping centers are those that offer merchandise for sale in major department stores or stores of a national or chain type and where there are several stores in the area selling the same type of merchandise

which would enable the shopper to make comparisons before buying.

5. Convenience shopping centers are those that have facilities for everyday shopping consisting primarily of grocery, drug, and consumer services. Eight or more net acres of land are normally required. Convenience shopping facilities are also provided for by comparison shopping centers.

Of the shopping centers shown on the Future General Land Use map, the majority already exist, either as developing or built-up centers. Most of these older centers have very little off-street parking space. Action to secure parking and improve these centers is needed if they are to maintain their competitive position. Since these centers are usually surrounded by homes, high costs of acquisition and clearance present the principal obstacles to improvement.

303.0103 Neighborhood Shopping and Local Commercial

The location of neighborhood shopping and local commercial uses are not shown on the Future General Land Use map because these local needs can best be determined as part of the process of planning neighborhood improvements.

Still, any planning of neighborhood shopping must account for the needs of this type of development. First, thoroughfare access in four directions should be provided for those neighborhood shopping stores grouped in centers, since most people will choose to drive to them. Second, the neighborhood shopping needs of any area in Detroit should be served by up to eight net acres of land, six of which should be devoted to parking. Land area required for parking could be reduced by the provision of parking structures. The majority of these shopping needs would be served by a supermarket, a variety store, a drugstore, a clothing store, and several other smaller, retail and service establishments.

The remaining commercial acreage that is not indicated on the Future General Land Use map serves local needs, in addition to those served by neighborhood shopping facilities. These needs can be related directly to the amount of residential development to be served. As a general rule, local commercial land needs can be estimated at 0.6 net acres/1,000 people.

Some typical local commercial uses are laundromats, grocery stores, restaurants, and household repair establishments. Land allocated for local commercial allows for uses that are

now operating satisfactorily in commercial frontages, and which are not likely to seek new locations in shopping centers.

303.0180 Other Policies Relating to Commercial Land Use

Refer also to Article 103 Summary, Section 202.0100 Neighborhood Unit Pattern, and Section 202.0200 Community Pattern; and Section 203.0100 Future General Land Use, for other city-wide policies that specifically relate to commercial areas. The remainder of this chapter, Chapter III Urban Systems Policies, and Chapter IV Urban Areas Policies provide further information that relates, more generally, to commercial uses and areas.

303.0190 The Map

For current information see the map entitled Future General Land Use - Detroit Master Plan inserted at the back of this document. An enlarged copy may be obtained from the City Plan Commission.